

COMMENTARY

WHAT MENDES-FRANCE'S "NEW DEAL" STANDS FOR

Gravedigger of the European Idea?

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FRANCE this past summer has witnessed something more than a parliamentary crisis and less than a revolution. With the same fanfare with which the Soviet Union adopted its "new line" and the United States its "new look," France has now adopted a "new style." She has been passing through a crisis of adjustment to a changed world situation, brought about primarily by the end of the "Stalin era" in Soviet Russia and the coming to power of the Republicans in the United States. That situation is better described as an easement in

With that penchant for easy, dramatic labels, American journalists have hailed the domestic program of the "dynamic" Mendès-France as France's "New Deal," and he has not been averse to the title. But some, examining his proposals and his performance, begin to wonder whether this is any more than a "New Look," or perhaps even less. Here HERBERT LUETHY, who in the past five years has contributed some of the most penetrating political analyses of the European scene published here or abroad, takes a cool look at Mendès-France, what he stands for and who supports him, and offers a sobering analysis of his real aims and direction. Mr. Luethy was born in Switzerland, took his doctorate in history and the romance languages at the University of Zurich, and has published a number of books on economics and social history. His most recent contribution to COMMENTARY was "France's New Parochial Nationalism" in May.

tension than a real "détente." The cold war has moved out of the stage of dramatic crisis into one of temporary stalemate, and those who came out of this war of position safe and sound—or at least alive—are settling down to a long, yet apparently bearable period of "coexistence." The Soviet Union has set about digesting its massive conquests rather than risking them right off in new adventures; the West, so far as you may speak of it as a unit, has resigned itself to granting *de facto* recognition to the present boundaries of the Soviet empire. The slogan of "liberation"—that last if purely rhetorical attempt to lend a moral impulse to the anti-Soviet resistance—vanished without even a lingering echo when the East German uprising of 1953 challenged the Eisenhower administration to put up or shut up.

Of course, the sense of uncertainty that hangs over the international situation is just as strong as ever; what we have is no true peace founded on solid international agreement, but a very uneasy state of "coexistence" which we must nevertheless expect to continue for a long time to come. It is not a living together, but a living next to each other, about which one prays that it will stay as "peaceful" as possible. But since the onetime Stalinist slogan of "peaceful coexistence" has now been adopted and proclaimed by Churchill and Eisenhower as well, a new—or

rather very old—spirit of *Realpolitik* is more or less openly victorious everywhere. Its greatest strength lies in its disregard of all moral and ideological considerations in favor of realistic calculations of power relations—but this is also its deepest illusion.

It is only too obvious that the relaxation of tension in the world situation is more dangerous for the free world's loose alliance than for the Soviet-ruled Eastern bloc; the somewhat cynical course of "realism" which the democracies are now pursuing deprives them of just that inner cohesion for which they have no substitute, as do their totalitarian opponents, in police control and ideological terror. All the warnings against the illusions of "peaceful coexistence" are therefore only too well founded. But there is war-weariness even in a cold war. After ten years of an almost constant alarm following five years of total war, the boundaries drawn before the onset of the cold war have not been pushed back or forward, at least in Europe, and this war-weariness asserts itself with an elemental force. All attempts to strengthen the Western front by keeping the alarm bells ringing by such artificial means as "psychological warfare," propaganda, and diplomacy have only boomeranged; for in this period of wishful thinking in which words count so much more than deeds, the fact that the United States talks tougher the more it passes over to a purely defensive policy, combining military budget cuts with grandiloquent oratory about a crusade, only gets it saddled with the reputation of a disturber of the peace.

IN FRANCE, a diplomacy that obstinately struggled to achieve goals that had been set at the high point of the cold war—at the time of the Korean conflict—soon after reached a state of open crisis. With the rejection of the EDC, this crisis in French diplomacy has struck at the weakest point of the whole system of the Atlantic alliance. But France's withdrawal from a pledge it signed more than two years before is only one aspect of a much broader development. The European Defense Community was not

an organic outcome of the policy of European integration, which had taken its first step toward concrete realization in the establishment of the European coal and steel union in the spring of 1950; it was an emergency product of the war panic set off by the Communist attack in Korea, a panic that overshadowed all the constructive sides of France's new European policy. When the United States reacted to the Korean war with a demand for the immediate rearmament of West Germany, France alone of the twelve member states of the Atlantic Pact objected; French diplomacy then hastily improvised the counter-project of the "European Army" in order to win time to discuss the form of this rearmament. After more than four years, there can no longer be any doubt that the attempt to push through the immediate establishment of a German army was hasty and ill-considered.

But the French counter-project of an "integrated European army," at first greeted with general skepticism as a mere delaying maneuver and now revealed to be just that, immediately debauched the whole policy of European unity. The attempt to give a non-existent European community a common army as its first attribute involved complications that made juridical monstrosities out of the Paris and Bonn agreements; in the frightfully complex and anonymous machinery of military-technical control authorities, without a political foundation or a political summit, in the clauses dictated not by solidarity but by distrust, *it was impossible any longer to recognize the great idea of a United Europe*. The French "Europeans" rallied to support this structure of agreements not for its own sake but because of their well-grounded fear that its collapse would bring down with it all the previous attempts at European integration, as well as fatally imperil any inclusion of Germany in the Western alliance; and because of an equally well-grounded hope that, once under way, military integration would by its own momentum compel the creation of those political institutions without which it would remain a headless monster. Only in the per-

spective of a more comprehensive structure of European unity did the "Defense Community," as it was formulated in the Paris agreements, make any sense. But the further France departed from the perspective of broad European unity, reducing her "European Program" to this one fragment of a common army—absurd as an end in itself—the more the "struggle for Europe" centered about the military issue. The enemies of any form of European cooperation could not have wished for a better battleground.

THE European Defense Community had its great chance in the situation that gave it rise; that chance lasted as long as there was a common awareness of the danger of Soviet attack. But then came the milder climate of "peaceful coexistence" and this consciousness of common danger slowly wore away; the old courses of a national diplomacy regained their plausibility and the struggle for EDC became an isolated, discouraging, and finally hopeless rear-guard action. And now in truth its collapse threatens to drag down with it every genuine attempt that has been made since the war to build up European solidarity and even European understanding. France today is turning back from the "ideal" to the "real." And the representative of this new realism is Pierre Mendès-France.

Upon taking office in June, Mendès-France was hailed in France and abroad, especially in the English-speaking countries, as the man who would lead France out of the slough of economic stagnation and social crisis and cure her of the political cancer of Communism—he would be a "French Roosevelt" bringing a "New Deal" and a new hope to his distraught country. It would be only too easy to show the complete absence of parallels between France's internal and external situation today and that which the "New Deal" grappled with twenty years ago in the United States. But the tremendous credit that the "Mendès-France Experiment" initially enjoyed, and which is still far from being exhausted, rests on this promise of great economic and social reforms that the

man's whole career seemed to give: his unbending opposition to all the discredited official economic and fiscal policies, his merciless diagnoses of France's public failings.

The diagnoses were correct, and many others had made them too; France has never in recent years lacked for penetrating and exhaustive analyses of her sickness. Only it was never so easy to see what kind of prescription, exactly, followed from the diagnoses, and after three months of the Mendès-France regime it is no clearer. Since taking office Mendès-France has been too busy with other things to grapple with economic problems. For the present, the great reforms remain a myth, and there is a great danger that they will continue to remain a myth. But it is this myth on which the prestige of the new regime rests, and for the sake of which much else is forgiven it. It is therefore necessary to examine the situation that confronted the new government when it took office.

PEOPLE in other countries have grown so inured to French governmental crises that they make hardly any attempt now to distinguish among them as to their causes and their gravity. The crisis this summer was unlike all the others—especially in what it was *not*. All the governments of recent years came a cropper over financial and budgetary questions; the French National Assembly seemed to have turned into a budgetary commission pure and simple. All other national and international problems saw the light only in the occasional intervals of a budget debate that stretched out over the entire parliamentary year. A year ago René Mayer fell because the treasury seemed to be facing bankruptcy at the end of every month; the government had to shuttle back and forth between Paris and Washington, keeping its head above water with American emergency grants alternating with new currency issues. But this summer there was no such talk of financial problems when the Laniel government was overthrown. The long year of "immobility" under Joseph Laniel was politically a year of indecision, of weariness, and of growing national irritation with France's

declining international prestige. Outside of politics, however, it was a year of recovery and growing economic stability in the milder climate of a relaxation of international tension. It was a year in which France's internal sources of strength were able to develop: the first effects began to be felt of a demographic revolution that after forty years of bloodletting has reversed the sinking population line and lowered the average age; a new sense of technical proficiency, of accomplishment, of "catching up and surpassing," has arisen in the key French industries as a result of the heroic scale of investment in the first postwar years and Marshall Plan aid, and this new enthusiasm is beginning to spread to other sectors of the economy.

External factors, too, helped along this process of economic growth, instead of hindering it as in almost all the previous years. The abatement of the cold war, in France as elsewhere, led to a decrease in speculation on world catastrophe; but stabilization in France, instead of putting an end to a war boom, halted the flight of capital and overcame some of the hesitations of investors. France is again beginning to think in terms of firm values and long periods; this alone is enough to set many things right. Except where the law or cartel restrictions expressly forbid it, high productivity and economic achievement are once again the goals of the French economy. In the midst of falling world market prices, French prices have kept at about their 1952 level, while the slow but steady rise in wages has brought them to approximately their prewar purchasing power. The fall in the international price of gold was not reflected on the highly speculative French money market until the autumn of 1953, but then it took the form of an actual collapse, and this promises to work a real revolution in the saving habits of the Frenchman, whom forty years of inflation had turned into a mere hoarder of specie and foreign currency: the gold buried under the apple tree has now proved to be a bad speculation and a savings account, a government bond, or even a business investment is much more likely to turn out profitable. Many

problems which yesterday seemed so insoluble have simply vanished from the scene. The currency is stable again, the treasury full, the reserves of gold and foreign exchange mount steadily, and the balance of trade is almost even; in short, the French economy is in equilibrium again.

IT IS, however, a highly artificial and fragile equilibrium. The basic condition of underproduction afflicting the French economy remains the same; the archaic structure of French economic life is still preserved behind a wall of protectionism and state subsidies; and high production costs and a low standard of living stand in the way of any true prosperity. Most French prices remain non-competitive; only a complicated system of import taxes, piled on top of tariff duties and used to subsidize exports, permits French products to appear on the world market. France's external payments deficit was just met in 1953 by eight hundred million dollars of direct and indirect aid. Her improved balance of trade is due primarily to the willingness of other European nations to open their borders to the wares of a convalescent France without demanding reciprocal treatment. The stability of the currency itself is endangered by an annual budget deficit of almost a trillion francs; any new change in international economic conditions could easily reawaken what is a merely dormant inflationary situation. A new devaluation of the franc, which could painlessly bring French prices into line with the international level for a while, has long been planned; it only awaits a favorable moment—or a crisis affording no other way out. Thus the major part of the French economy still lives in a hothouse. But inside this hothouse it is doing better than it has done at any time since the end of the war.

It is hard to estimate what part the economic policy of the Laniel government and its Minister of Finance and Economy, Edgar Faure, has played in this internal recovery. It was as eclectic, as well-intentioned, and in practice as much hindered by the sniping of coalitions and interest groups as that of almost all the previous governments; but for

the first time it had the luck to be swimming with instead of against the stream. The avalanche of decrees that poured out of all the ministries in the autumn of 1953, promulgated on the basis of the economic authority granted by Parliament, embodies bits and parts of almost all the administrative and structural reforms that had been waiting in the files for years for signature. For the most part, these decrees merely laid the legal basis for future reforms—now that France is enjoying a partial recovery, reform is easier and less painful but also less urgent. Only the future will tell whether France has the gumption, with her new sense of strength and independence, to submit to a discipline that she always resisted stubbornly as long as it seemed forced on her by external peril and pressure—whether she will do the possible where she always left the urgent undone.

THE only key minister Mendès-France has kept over from the Laniel government is Edgar Faure, in the Finance, Economics, and Planning post; this is evidence enough that the previous economic policy is being continued unchanged for the time being. Faure held office for a short time in 1952 as "the youngest Prime Minister in French history"; as one of the "renovators," he was always close to Mendès-France, even though the two men are bitter personal rivals. Thus we see that the "new spirit" was introduced into French economic policy some time ago, without waiting for Mendès-France, and it is the program taken over from the Laniel government that is being continued to the end of the 1954 budgetary year, without significant modification.

Even in the statements on future economic intentions that Mendès-France made to the Economic Commission and the National Assembly in connection with Parliament's grant of full economic powers to him before it recessed, there was no new note sounded—unless we call new the fantastically complicated plan to bring about the entire economic rehabilitation of France through a "reconversion fund" (which Laniel had already set up) for guiding unprofitable enterprises

into new industrial fields. There will certainly be no lack of clients for such a public fund. But it is doubtful whether "reconversion" by state subsidies is a desirable way of doing what outside of France is done by competition; it may simply add one more subsidy to all those subsidies France gives to inefficient producers, to the extreme detriment of the French economy. There is also a question of feasibility; such an attempt to renovate the French economy as it were in a test tube, apart from France's external situation, depends on getting together very large sums.

But the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister, despite urgent inquiries, are as silent as the grave about the plan's financing; for that secret we must wait until the promulgation of the 1955 budget. The one possible source of funds that remains to a budget already dangerously in deficit—and it was to this source that Mendès-France continually pointed when he was in opposition—is a reduction in military expenditures. But the truce in Indo-China, however salutary on other grounds, has not helped France's financial position in the slightest. America had already been bearing the full costs of the war (thereby simultaneously making up the French dollar deficit), and the French expeditionary force cannot simply be disbanded because a truce was signed. On the other hand, a sharp cut in military expenses at home—coupled with the prevention of an agreement on German rearmament—is only possible if one has blind faith in "peaceful coexistence" and is willing to let the freedom and existence of Western Europe depend entirely on the Kremlin's good will.

THE question of "peaceful coexistence" is a decisive factor even for that internal stability on which the success of France's economic reforms hangs. For a year the Communist trade union leaders of the CGT have been carefully avoiding any social agitation, since that might split the united front between the Communists and the far right against the European Defense Community. Now that the immediate goal of this strange

alliance has been achieved, Mendès-France's still undefined foreign policies will determine whether he will continue to be "tolerated" by the Communists, or whether they will confront him in a few weeks' time with large-scale wage demands and strike threats. As long as the general policy of the new government remains more or less indefinite, its "new economic policy"—its "New Deal"—must remain in the realm of slogan.

However, one essential if by no means novel feature of this economic policy is already clear today. Men like Paul Reynaud and Jean Monnet were in agreement with Mendès-France in diagnosing the French economy's sickness as torpor and "stagnation by agreement." But for them the only way to health lay in knocking out the panes in the protectionist hothouse, bringing the French economy into contact and competition with its neighbors, linking its expansive capabilities to an open European market; this was the very realistic starting point of the policy of European integration. But since the Faure regime in the spring of 1952 reinstated with one stroke of the pen all the protectionist measures that had been painfully got rid of in the course of years of effort to liberalize European trade, the French economy has steadily moved further away from the "European market." Mendès-France himself has always insisted that the rehabilitation of the French economy must precede the opening of the borders—which is the same thing as saying that France daren't go near the water until she has learned to swim. If Mendès-France really plans major reforms, we can be sure they will be an experiment in autarchy.

There is no longer any talk of "Europe" even in the economic field; already an open state of war exists between the Paris government and the European Coal and Steel Authority in Luxemburg, that solitary, ever more isolated expression of the policy of European unity. And so it is no surprise to find all the protectionist groups in France showing Mendès-France a right good will—though it ought to surprise the believers in his revolutionary "New Deal." The new

regime's desire for reform is certainly genuine; it is only that its chances of success, given the methods it employs, are highly doubtful once the only "threat"—as Paul Reynaud once put it—capable of shaking the French entrepreneurs out of their torpor and routine, the threat of an open European market, is removed. If those optimists who believe that the peace of Europe is henceforth safe without military preparedness are proved right; if the strict requirements that the cold war seemed to lay down for national survival lose their force in the sunshine of "peaceful coexistence"; above all, if the plans for the economic unification of Europe are pitched into the waste basket with the political and military unification plans—then everything will go on as it did before, with some inevitable minor adjustments and changes, just as it did for twenty years in those notoriously happy days between the wars. The reforms that would give the French their long-awaited "New Deal," worked out to the last detail, have gathered dust for years in the drawers of the Ministries and Commissions, but no immediately threatening economic catastrophe forces them to be brought out. Pierre Mendès-France is like a physician who has been called to a sickbed after the patient has recovered and tells the patient he needs a lawyer now and not a doctor. But with typical assurance, Mendès-France at once announces himself to be that lawyer. The great reformer of the French economy has taken over—the French Foreign Ministry.

THE positive side of the Laniel government's "immobilism" was its economic policy. Its negative side was the pursuit of a policy of power and prestige politics, using the resources of other countries, to the point of utter collapse, a policy that Foreign Minister Bidault defended with increasingly neurotic stubbornness. "Atlantic power, Pacific power, African power, European power" was its theme; on principle, it risked everything rather than voluntarily surrender an inch. Nothing shows the character of this policy more clearly than the fact that as late as the Geneva conference, with catas-

trophe staring it in the face, the French Foreign Ministry haggled with the delegates of the Indochinese national governments over every clause and limitation of the independence treaties; no arguments, no defeats, no Allied urgings could persuade it to concede sovereignty to the anti-Communist government of Vietnam and thus enable the latter to face the Vietminh on an equal plane. The inevitable result of this was that France, though not Bidault personally, finally had to reach an agreement with the Communist Vietminh over the head of the Vietnam government.

Bidault's diplomacy was always unjustly reproached, especially in France, for being the tail to America's kite; in reality it was a daredevil attempt to carry out, balanced on American shoulders, a French policy for which France's own strength and stature no longer sufficed. To an extent that can only fully be realized in retrospect, America's whole foreign policy—and with it the entire Atlantic alliance—followed in France's wake. This was true not only in Europe, where no step was taken except on French initiative, but also in North Africa, where Washington sacrificed its traditional "anti-colonialism" and its wooing of the Arab world to the pettiest and most short-sighted French interests, and in Southeast Asia, where the United States financed a French war whose political and military conduct it could neither approve nor correct. And the sole price for all this, promised over and over again, haggled over endlessly, and never paid, was, paradoxically, the European Defense Community—that France should support a proposal which had been initiated by French diplomacy and only accepted by her partners after long and painful hesitation!

EUROPE still figured in the official French program. But from the time Bidault returned to the Quai d'Orsay, it was reduced to an indigestible remnant—EDC—of a general policy that was no longer valid; and French diplomacy demanded an ever higher price for not finally tossing the remnant into the wastebasket along with all the rest

of the European program. At the Rome conference of European foreign ministers in the spring of 1953, with Bidault representing France in the place of Schuman for the first time, she began to beat a retreat from all the international commitments she had undertaken jointly with her European partners, by proposing ever new conditions, supplementary protocols, and interpretations. At the Brussels Conference this summer, Mendès-France was only following in Bidault's footsteps when he proposed that the other member states release France almost unconditionally from all the obligations that the EDC treaty imposed on the other partners—apparently in the honest belief that the sole purpose of the whole thing was to get German troops into the Allied forces, and everything else was ideological camouflage that might safely be discarded in view of the fact that it still disturbed some French sensibilities. Pierre Mendès-France was undertaker for the European Defense Community, but it was Georges Bidault who killed it; it would not be fair to blame a long-developing situation on the one man who drew the inevitable conclusion from it.

Bidault's policy of conducting a great-power politics standing on America's shoulders was built on mutual illusions and was bound to end in mutual disillusionment. It has poisoned Allied relations, and with its final collapse brought about the present crisis of French diplomacy. But its last act had an almost tragic magnitude. At the Bermuda and Berlin conferences, Bidault got together all his cards in order to enter the now unavoidable Indochinese truce negotiations from a "position of strength." At a conference not of France and Indo-China but of the great powers, in which France would have the entire weight of the West behind her and matters would be decided not by the outcome of the hopeless local war but by the international balance of power, he hoped to be able to dictate his own terms. But the catastrophe of Dienbienphu threw the Western alliance into complete confusion. Never was there a sharper contrast between the loud, aggressive declarations of the Repub-

lican administration at Washington, seeking to distinguish itself from its predecessor's "feeble policy of appeasement," and its actual cautious avoidance of any involvement in the war despite the French government's desperate pleas for American intervention. Every day from Washington one heard loud threats of atomic war directed at the Chinese, and calming reassurances to the American voters that the United States would never let itself in for a "new Korea."

When the British vetoed intervention, the American government heaved a great sigh of relief and seized on this pretext to retire from the whole unpleasant business—it virtuously disapproved of any negotiations with the Communists when nothing in fact remained any longer but to negotiate, and left Bidault to face the Eastern bloc alone. Never was the self-defeating nature of the strategy of "massive retaliation" made more plain: it has no answer to pinpricks, incidents, and local conflicts—all the things that are the daily diet of the cold war today—except to threaten an apocalyptic final conflict that scares America's allies much more than it deters her enemies. Statesmen could not forget that the power of America remained the backbone of the free world, and that even the more elastic and less dogmatic British diplomacy, in which France now sought a last refuge, was possible only because of the existence of this power in the background; but the public could only see that a gigantic bluff, which at the same time was a perilous playing with fire, had ignominiously collapsed.

WITH all the dogs on his heels—a Geneva conference beginning to break up, a National Assembly cross-examining him every week and giving him smaller and smaller majorities and shorter and shorter respites, a government disintegrating into its constituent elements and falling into general disrepute—Bidault still struggled on with the courage of despair; the truce his successor signed a month later was already well on the way under Bidault. But it was too good a chance not only to overthrow him and the

hopelessly exhausted Laniel government, but to put an end to seven years of conservative center governments and ten years of uninterrupted Christian Democratic control of colonial and foreign policy.

The opposition that now at last had its chance was that *Jacobin-Gaullist-Communist "Nationalist Front"* which had united in the fight against the European Defense Community. To it now rallied all those who were disillusioned, angered, and dismayed. A *purely negative coalition affording not the slightest possibility for a positive new policy*, it was sufficient for appointing a receiver to strike the balance and write off the losses.

It was not a revolution, though its prelude had many of the characteristics of a coup d'état: a situation full of confusion and indecision permitted a young, brilliant, and ambitious group of "realists" to overthrow a seemingly immovable government of old men and seize the helm. The common denominator of this motley group can be found in a slogan whose ambiguity is sufficiently demonstrated by contemporary history: "national renovation"—with the accent on the adjective as much as the noun. This group of Paris journalists, intellectuals, and "managers" brought together a great deal of energy and irresponsible drive, as well as a great deal of injured national pride: "Now we will show the world that France, too, can call the tune."

The Mendès-France cabinet is no unwieldy coalition—it was obvious from the first that no government could be formed from the heterogeneous opposition that had brought it to the helm—but a one-man government. It is the premier's personal brain trust, with interchangeable shadow-ministers and interchangeable parliamentary majorities. Its task is confined to winding things up—first the Indo-China problem and then all those other problems in Africa and Europe which have been dragging on for years. Mendès-France drew up a three-months' time table, promising Parliament to lead it out of all the old blind alleys in that short period of time. And a vague but mighty surge of hope greeted this proclamation of

a determination to "wipe the slate clean" at last.

MENDÈS-FRANCE was able to represent the irreconcilably divided forces of the opposition just because his ten years of opposition had always been "technical" rather than "political," and because his positive economic program—his "New Deal"—which would have won him the bitter enmity of the entire reactionary wing of the opposition, had no chance of being considered at that particular moment. Even in the year before his taking office, when he pressed or was being pressed ever more impatiently towards power and his critique of the Laniel government touched more and more on political questions, it was always in his capacity as an economic and financial technician. His questions were always the bookkeeper's questions: What will it cost? What will it bring in? Can we afford it? In his attack on the conduct of the war in Indo-China, as in his rejection of a policy of France's begging and borrowing her way to the position of a world power, Mendès-France never advanced any other arguments. It was a question of "looking facts in the face," of suiting one's goals to the available means, of sacrificing the unproductive, however desirable otherwise, to the productive. Insofar as he put military expenditures at the head of the unproductive list, he was also taking a political position, and one that was popular and even adapted to demagogic exploitation. But from a bookkeeper's point of view it was the simple truth; the only question is whether the bookkeeper's point of view is sufficiently comprehensive to decide matters affecting the life and future of a nation.

Seen from this bookkeeper's angle, the battle over the European Defense Community (on which Mendès-France never took a position) was a parochial piece of internal politics disturbing the normal course of French political life. The necessity of the undertaking could never be clear from a technical and "realistic" point of view, only in the "idealistic" perspective of European unification. Mendès-France believed with

complete sincerity that a compromise based on the arithmetical relation of parliamentary forces would bring the "reasonable" supporters and the opponents of EDC under one roof. When this attempt merely gained him the enmity of both sides, his sole concern was to remove this stumbling-block from the path of his government. It was in this new spirit of realism, aiming only at the businessman's solution of immediate problems without any regard for continuity of policy or great ideas, that Mendès-France approached his task of winding up the ruined inheritance on which he had entered.

THE brilliant successes of this improvised diplomacy are well-known. By winning his bold bet that he would conclude a truce in Indo-China within a month or resign, he kept his government in office and gained it tremendous popularity. On the day before the debate that brought down the Laniel-Bidault government, Molotov delivered a deliberately offensive and threatening speech (in strong contrast with his subsequent role of conciliator) in which he indicated unmistakably that he wanted to negotiate with someone else. That was the *coup de grâce* for Bidault. And a month later, when Molotov conceded to Mendès-France what he had refused Bidault, thereby permitting him to win his bet, Molotov again acted as the arbiter of French politics; Mendès-France had received a vote of confidence both from the National Assembly and the Soviet bloc. And no one, not even the "old men" of the French Chamber growling over their dethronement, had any desire to scrutinize too closely the terms of a truce that at least permitted France to "withdraw with honor." Only the Vietnamese government, deserted by all the world, protested helplessly against signing a treaty that left it pretty much in the position of the Prague government after Munich.

The second stroke was just as brilliant: the Premier's surprise flight to Tunis, where he issued a renewed proclamation of "Tunisia's internal sovereignty" and resumed negotiations with the Tunisian nationalists,

thus with a single psychological shock nipping an incipient civil war in the bud. And all this he did in the company and with the support of Marshal Juin, that same colonial warrior who a year before in Morocco had allied himself with local magnates and feudal lords to instigate a civil war, going over the head of the French government to compel the deposition of the Sultan. It was a marriage of convenience, explicable not by any change of heart on the Marshal's part but by his thirst for vengeance on the Laniel government which had disciplined him, and by his late but noisy entry into the anti-European camp. Only the future will show how far it will be possible to carry out a real policy of conciliation in North Africa in alliance with such nationalists and reactionaries as Juin. But the masterly use of such adventitious elements has been the only basis on which the "new realism" could build, in the absence of any solid parliamentary support or comprehensive political conceptions.

The third act was the burial of the European Defense Community, which had sunk to the level of a local ideological squabble on the order of the issue of secular schools. The decisive thing here was the resentment at the desire of "foreigners" to have a voice in this strictly French affair. It was in a spirit of defiance that the French National Assembly voted to bury the European Defense Community "like a dead dog," without even being willing to listen to the funeral addresses of those who had fathered it.

BUT with this the negative coalition of nationalists and Communists has fulfilled its purpose. The burial of the European Defense Community has solved nothing. Since EDC was not primarily concerned with the technical question of integrating West Germany militarily into the Atlantic alliance, it cannot be replaced by an alternative technical solution. Its demise has not opened a way but closed one. And in simply saying "No" without indicating what was to take EDC's place, and then going on vacation,

Parliament was not making a political decision, it was abdicating. The majority for rejection was a one-day majority that will never be able to get together on anything again. August 30, 1954, has made it clear that in a National Assembly numbering a hundred Communist deputies representing no French cause at all, and almost as many ex-Gaullist deputies representing neither a movement, constituents, nor an idea, no majority is possible any longer for a foreign policy. A government that refused to take a position on a historic decision affecting the future of the nation, washing its hands of the whole matter, was a true reflection of this situation.

To be sure, the "European faction" in the French National Assembly showed itself, even in defeat, as qualitatively and quantitatively the most significant minority in this Parliament of minorities. Henceforth no French policy that aims at anything better than catastrophe can do without its support; this is the most significant new development in French politics. But this minority that came so close to being a majority is hopelessly demoralized after two years of rear-guard actions; it has neither a favorable opportunity nor a concrete issue around which to reform its ranks. The French Socialists, who like almost all the old parties were split down the middle over the question of EDC, have recovered their unity in a doctrinaire rejection of all German rearmament. The other "Europeans," too, are looking to revenge themselves by systematically obstructing any alternative solution—in which they can count on the enthusiastic support of the Communists. Restoring clarity to the political alignment in France will be a long and difficult process.

The shift of Communist tactics, between the summer of 1953 and the summer of 1954, from opposition to Mendès-France's candidacy to support of him, which signified a resumption by the Communists of a positive role in French internal politics for the first time in a long time, has not taken place without a hitch for them. Their decision to sacrifice all the immediate interests of the

party to a maneuver in foreign policy—at a moment when French social ferment and the past summer's epidemic of strikes seemed to call for a "class struggle" line—led to serious crises and purges in the party leadership and cadres. These have by no means ended; "integral nationalism" still stimulates uneasiness in the ranks of this once revolutionary party. But the tactic has paid off. Its "National Front" with Gaullists and nationalists has enabled the Communist party to break out of the isolation which it has been in since 1947, to the point where on August 30 in the National Assembly when the Communists triumphantly sang the "Marseillaise" after the defeat of the European Defense Community, Gaullists, right-wing extremists, gray-haired generals, and Socialist pacifists unhesitatingly joined in the singing.

Undoubtedly the nationalist opponents of the treaty thought they were using the Communists just as shock troops. But when one saw spokesmen of the decimated Gaullist "Rally" delivering their patriotic warnings against the German danger before the disciplined Communist applause brigades in the Paris Sport Palace, one was reminded of the tail that thought it could wag the dog. Even so brilliant a tactician as Mendès-France could fall victim to this illusion. A few declarations of fidelity to the Western alliance are not enough to disperse the coalition of Communists, neutralists, and nationalists (dominated completely by the former) that brought him to power. "I am their leader, therefore I must follow them," is an old French political proverb.

BUT the great reversal of the postwar period has been completed. France has returned to a policy of national *Realpolitik* on the prewar model, with opportunism its only principle and immediate national advantage its only aim. For those other European nations which have survived the last great attempt at this sort of *Realpolitik* in the Hitler years, nothing remains except to follow France more or less unwillingly along

this path. All the issues that seemed susceptible of a supra-national solution in the perspective of European unity, from the question of German rearmament to that of the Saar, will again become sources of national conflict. All the rivalries and frictions will have to be settled on the fragile basis of "mutual good will"; there will no longer be a *common* will to count on. The non-Communist spokesmen of the "National Front" that defeated the European Community in France were thinking of France and only France; no one (except of course the Communists and their fellow-travelers) seems to have looked beyond France's borders in taking this decision.

But the perspectives of the future are already implicit in the present. Europe has been there through all these years, if not as an active faith, still as an accepted goal toward which to strive, an idea that even its most active opponents paid lip-service to as the only acceptable image of the European future. Much that was possible thanks to this idea will be possible no longer, and many old ghosts that had at last been laid will start up all over again. If it is no longer possible to look to a common future, there is no other choice but to look to the past. Such are the inescapable consequences of the new *Realpolitik*.

These consequences will take some time to show themselves, and they need not be catastrophic. Even *Realpolitik* offers possibilities for rational and purposeful action. Perhaps too, in the last analysis, anything is better than the continuation of a mendacious abnegation of responsibility in which goals once piously proclaimed only served as a pretext for selling illusions to France's allies in return for cash. The "new style" of French diplomacy has the advantage of honesty. Europe has lost nothing but an idea, and it is normal for the daily grind of politics to get along without ideas.

There is only one thing wrong with this—Russian policy, which is also certainly not lacking in realism, has never renounced its idea.